



Indiana Department of Education
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS
Dr. Tony Bennett, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Statehouse, Room 228
Indianapolis, IN 46204

NEWS

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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Media Contact: Stephanie Sample, Press Secretary
(317) 232-6616

ssample@doe.in.gov

IDOE Proposes Reforms to Improve Teacher Quality

All new teachers will be content experts in the subjects they teach if new licensing rules announced today by Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett are adopted.

“Research shows teachers are the primary factor influencing student achievement,” Bennett said. “Our goal is to ensure educators are highly knowledgeable in the content areas they’re teaching.”

“These licensing recommendations will put the focus on teachers’ content knowledge and instructional skill while giving teachers and administrators greater flexibility and freedom to improve instructional quality.”

Indiana’s policies regarding teacher quality are viewed subpar by education experts. The National Council on Teacher Quality’s (NCTQ) *2008 State Teacher Policy Yearbook* gave Indiana a ‘D’ in identifying teachers’ effectiveness and retaining valuable early-career teachers.

According the Education Trust (2008), Indiana’s high poverty schools face the greatest challenges in attracting and retaining quality teachers. Almost half of all math classes (40.5 percent) in high-poverty secondary schools are taught by out-of-field teachers.

Marian University President Dan Elsener, a member of the State Board of Education, said, “As a former teacher, principal, superintendent, educational foundation leader, and now University president with a deep commitment to preparing outstanding teachers, I can say unequivocally that the DOE’s proposed rules make significant strides toward advancing teacher quality in Indiana classrooms.

“These changes should serve as a clarion call to the educational community: Innovative approaches to preparing teachers to advance student learning is a top priority and is necessary — now. These new policies are welcome changes to educators who have been burdened with excessive regulations and rote compliance for far too long. Now is the time to empower our educators so they may serve students more effectively.”

“In our view, Indiana’s proposed regulations are bound to have a positive impact on the quality of teacher preparation in the state,” said Kate Walsh, President of the National Council on Teacher Quality. “We commend the state for streamlining its process for licensing teachers and raising standards for entering the profession. This is an important step toward ensuring that all children in Indiana – and especially children in poverty – have high quality, effective teachers.”

To guarantee the highest teacher quality, the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is proposing the following changes:

■ **Increase content-area requirements for teacher licensure.** Secondary education teachers (grades 5-12) will be required to receive a baccalaureate degree with a major in the content area they wish to teach and a minor in education.

Elementary teachers (grades Pre-K to 6) must receive either (1) a baccalaureate degree with a major in education and a minor in one content area or (2) a baccalaureate degree with a major in any classroom-applicable content area and a minor in education.

As an additional option, elementary and secondary teachers will be eligible for licensure with certification from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE). The ABCTE is a certification program designed specifically for career changers. The program ensures expertise and preparedness by requiring candidates to hold a baccalaureate degree and pass tests on both instructional and content-area knowledge.

■ **Eliminate burdensome requirements for new teachers and replace them with a better program.** Under current regulations, beginning teachers are required to create teaching portfolios and participate in a teacher-mentor program to move from the initial practitioner license to a proficient practitioner license. Both of these requirements are time consuming for teachers and neither has been linked to better teaching or student success. By eliminating both these requirements, teachers and school systems will save considerable time and money. (Teacher-mentor programs will remain a local option for schools.)

A simplified Beginning Teacher Residency Program will replace the portfolio and mentor requirements. This program will give building-level administrators, such as principals, the responsibility and authority to target the individual needs of students by assessing teacher ability, developing improvement plans and monitoring growth for every beginning teacher.

■ **Streamline license renewal for current teachers, and make it easier to expand expertise.** Tuition-based course requirements will no longer be required for license renewal, allowing teachers to gain the credits they need from existing in-service workshops and a professional growth program. This move could save teachers as much as \$1400 in tuition every five years.

Under the new licensing rules, building-level administrators will have the power to determine what types of professional-development courses teachers need to increase student achievement and renew teaching licenses.

Moreover, IDOE will simplify the process for educators to add content areas to their teaching licenses. Instead of imposing heavy coursework requirements for certification in new subject areas, teachers need only pass content-knowledge exams to demonstrate expertise in the subjects they wish to teach.

■ **Give school corporations and school boards more flexibility to hire and place the best candidates.** To increase flexibility in teacher placement, IDOE will effectively reduce five existing licensing categories to two. By creating just two categories — grades Pre-K to 6 and grades 5 to 12 — school corporations can move teachers to different grade levels where needed to improve student achievement. Pre-K to 12 licensing categories will still exist for a few non-instructional license types, such as administrators.

Some of the nation's most innovative and successful school leaders cannot be superintendents or principals under existing regulations. The proposed changes to regulations would allow school boards and superintendents to seek state-approved waivers to hire superintendents and principals outside the traditional education pipeline.

Along with state approval, superintendent candidates will be required to have at least a master's degree and pass the school leader's licensure test. Principal candidates must have a valid teaching license and pass the school leader's licensure test.

In total, IDOE's proposed licensing changes would eliminate two separate and active sets of licensing rules and transition all license holders into new rules by July 1, 2010.

Before final adoption, there will be a public-comment period and the changes will be subject to approval by the Professional Standards Board, the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Office of the Governor.

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For a complete listing of proposed changes to licensing regulations, see the attached fact sheet.